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SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/21/2017  
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, IZ, IR, SY  
SUBJECT: TALABANI GIVES READOUT OF SYRIA VISIT, PASSES  
MESSAGE FROM SULEIMANI

Classified By: Ambassador Khalilzad per 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Iraqi President Jalal Talabani told the Ambassador in a meeting on January 21 that Syria had agreed to cooperate in improving the stability and security of Iraq, but they needed improved trade relations as well. The Syrians told Talabani they also wanted to improve relations with the Shia and wanted to invite SCIRI leader Abdel Aziz al-Hakim to Damascus. Talabani said the next steps in their relationship included implementing the agreement between their respective Ministries of Interior on intelligence sharing and securing the border between the two countries. He said IRGC-Quds Force Commander Qassem Suleimani had flown to Damascus to give Talabani a message for the Ambassador - that Iran is not targeting Americans and is ready to cooperate. Talabani and the Ambassador also discussed the way forward on the security dialogue with Iran and Syria and pressing domestic issues. END SUMMARY.

----- Trade Paramount for Syria -----

2. (C) Talabani said his meetings with the Syrians were very frank, and he claimed that they have opened a new chapter in their relations. According to Talabani, he took a different view than the Syrians on how to approach security and trade issues. The Chief of Syrian military intelligence Asef Shokat told Talabani he had orders to

cooperate with Iraq, but he said Iraq and Syria need to improve trade relations and increased security cooperation will follow. He said once trade is increased the Syrians will be more committed to relations with Iraq. Talabani shared with the Syrians his view that security needed to come before cooperation on trade, oil, and all other issues.

----- Syria Wants Improved Shia Relations -----

3. (C) Talabani said Syria wants to improve its relationship with the Shia. They want to invite SCIRI leader Abdel Aziz al-Hakim and are willing to change their Shia policy. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad told Talabani that former Prime Minister Jafari never visited Syria when he was in power, but now has visited. According to Talabani, Jafari told the Syrians that the U.S. refused to let them come, and that PM Maliki is now using the U.S. as an excuse not to visit them. He also said the Syrians are against the Saudis funding Iraqi opposition figures like Salih Mutlaq, Khalaf Ulayan, and other groups and they also want to invite Barzani.

----- MOI Agreement, Border Problem, Dialogue -----

4. (C) Talabani said the next steps in Iraq's relationship with Syria await changes in Syrian media. He said the Iraqi and Syrian Ministries of Interior signed an agreement on exchanging information on terrorists and other criminals. The Syrians told Talabani that he should work on fixing the de-Ba'athification process.

5. (C) Syria agreed to fight the border problem, but they told Talabani that there are three sources that facilitate border crossings that they must deal with: Islamist groups inside Syria, people on the border such as tribes taking money, and corrupt people within the Syrian government.

6. (C) Talabani told the Ambassador that Assad asked Talabani to relay to the U.S. that his policy was the policy of his father, Hafez al-Assad. He said Syria is ready to have a dialogue with Israel and they are ready to come to Washington if they get an invitation letter. Bashar said Syria is ready to discuss all issues of concern with the U.S. -- including Lebanon and Iran. He emphasized that Syria was an Arab country, signaling Talabani's willingness to downgrade relations with Iran in exchange for improved relations with the U.S. Talabani saw this as an opportunity. Talabani suggested holding a bilateral meeting between Syria and Iraq on securing the border with the U.S.

present as advisor to Iraq.

----- Other Atmospherics -----  
7. (C) Talabani had a meeting with Syrian parliamentarians. He said the Iraqi delegation conducted themselves appropriately except Salaam Jumaili, a member of the Iraqi Islamic Party, who said at a meeting with Syrian Ba'athists that if he was Syrian he would go to Iraq to fight the U.S.

8. (C) The Syrians told Talabani that the Syrian street was upset about the circumstances surrounding the execution of Saddam. They said Maliki should not have gone on television to sign the execution order (it looked like revenge) and it should not have occurred on the Eid holiday.

----- Suleimani Message -----  
9. (S) According to Talabani, IRGC Quds Force Commander Qassem Suleimani visited him in Syria to pass a message for the Ambassador. Suleimani told Talabani the U.S. and Iran have common interests in Iraq and are both working for success and security and against the terrorists; he said "I swear on the grave of Khomeini I haven't authorized a bullet against the U.S." He admitted to having hundreds of agents in Iraq at his disposal but denied ever using them against U.S. forces. He told Talabani he is ready to cooperate directly or indirectly through the Iraqi authorities. He said he wants the new Iraq strategy to be successful. He admitted that the Iranians captured in Erbil were members of Pastaran but denied that they were Quds Force. He also admitted that they were targeting the British. Talabani admonished him to stop attacking the Brits, and Suleimani agreed to return to Iran to discuss it with Khamenei.

10. (S) Suleimani told Talabani that Iran is ready to have a dialogue with the U.S. on Iraq security. He said they could assist with Baghdad security, security in the south, and the militias. He told Talabani they would try to stop the Jaysh al-Mahdi militia, and support Prime Minister Maliki against them. He said the dialogue could happen in one of three ways: messages through Talabani, a bilateral meeting (U.S.-Iran), or an Iraq-Iran bilateral with the U.S. present in an advisory capacity. (Note: General Casey and the Ambassador will cable to Washington a proposed response strategy. End note.).

----- Domestic Issues -----

11. (C) The Ambassador urged Talabani to help reach agreement on the Hydrocarbons law, the de-Ba'athification law and work on a "virtual" moderate front. The Ambassador and Talabani then discussed what sort of reconciliation plan would reduce the violence in Iraq. Talabani said the South African experience provides good lessons for Iraq.

KHALILZAD

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SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/03/2037  
TAGS: IR, IZ, PGOV, PREL, PTER  
SUBJECT: IRAQI MINISTER RELAYS OFFER FROM IRGC QUDS FORCE  
COMMANDER

Classified By: AMBASSADOR RYAN C. CROCKER, REASONS 1.4 (B)  
AND (D)

1. (S/NODIS) SUMMARY: On August 12, following his return from a trip with Prime Minister Maliki to Iran, Iraqi Minister of State for National Security Affairs (MSNSA) Shirwan al-Waili delivered a message to MNF-I Commanding General Petraeus from Iranian Brigadier General Qasem Solemani, the commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). Al-Waili stated that Solemani had asked him to relay the message that Iranian activity in Iraq would decrease dramatically if detained Jaish al-Mahdi (JAM) Special Groups leader Qais Khazali were released. General Petraeus responded that Iran needed to immediately cease its actions, which were tantamount to a war by proxy against Iraq and the U.S., that if it did not it would face serious consequences, and that it made no sense to release Khazali since he was a key figure who could strengthen JAM's actions against the GOI and the Coalition. END SUMMARY.

2. (S/NODIS) MSNSA al-Waili met with MNF-I Commanding General Petraeus August 12 to deliver a message he had received from Iranian Quds Force Commander Solemani on August 10 while al-Waili was visiting Iran as part of Prime Minister Maliki's delegation. Pol-Mil Counselor and MNF-I BG Bergner were also present at the meeting. Al-Waili explained that he met Solemani in his hotel in Tehran after earlier meetings with Iranian President Ahmadinejad and National Security Council Secretary Larijani. Al-Waili

claimed that these earlier meetings made it clear to him that neither Ahmadinejad nor Larijani were in control of Iranian activities in Iraq. According to al-Waili, Solemani presented himself as having sole authority over Iranian actions in Iraq.

3. (S/NODIS) Al-Waili said the first part of the conversation with Solemani concerned whether the U.S. would attack Iran. Al-Waili said he then discussed Iranian involvement in Iraq. Solemani, he said, asked him to convey an oral message to General Petraeus. The message was that Iran would decrease activity in Iraq dramatically if the Coalition would release Jaish al-Mahdi (JAM) Special Groups leader Qais Khazali, an Iraqi in Coalition custody as a security internee. Al-Waili added that Solemani pledged "you will see results in two months."

4. (S/NODIS) General Petraeus told al-Waili that Iranian actions and their provision of explosively-formed penetrators (EFPs), 240 mm rockets, and other weapons to their client militias in Iraq were very dangerous. He rejected the idea of releasing Khazali, stating that it defied logic to release someone who would unite and strengthen JAM. General Petraeus urged al-Waili to tell Solemani that Iran needed to stop its actions immediately or face the prospect of isolation or worse. He characterized Iranian actions as tantamount to a declaration of war on Iraq and the U.S. Iran needed to stop funding, equipping, and training Iraqi militants, actions which were of increasing concern in Baghdad and other Coalition capitals, and were not even in the long-term interest of Iran itself, he concluded.

5. (S/NODIS) Al-Waili took notes and said that he had told Solemani that Iran, Iraq, and the entire region would be the losers if Iran continued its destructive actions. Al-Waili related that Solemani claimed to be disturbed that JAM was engaged in destructive activities. Furthermore, Solemani said that the ongoing trilateral U.S.-Iraq-Iran talks would not make any difference because he alone decides what the Iranian government does in Iraq.

6. (S/NODIS) Al-Waili related his opinion that Solemani believes that his control over Iranian activities in Iraq makes him a major political deal-maker. He noted that this was his first meeting with Iranians in which they admitted to involvement in Iraq. Throughout the discussion with General Petraeus, al-Waili emphasized that he was not a

messenger for Iran but rather an Iraqi patriot. General Petraeus affirmed that, as such, he would be credible when delivering our response to Solemani.

CROCKER

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INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/13/2018

TAGS: PGOV, PREL, IZ, IR

SUBJECT: ANALYSIS OF MAY 12 16-POINT SADR CITY CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT

REF:

- A. BAGHDAD 1437 (NOTAL-VP ADEL ON UIA DELEGATION)
- B. 06 MAY 2008 EMBASSY O/I (ADIB ON UIA DELEGATION)
- C. BAGHDAD 1027 (BASRAH AGREEMENT)

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (S) Summary: On May 12, a committee comprised of representatives of United Iraq Alliance (UIA) and the Sadr Trend agreed upon a sixteen-point declaration as part of a larger four-day ceasefire agreement that expires May 15. The sixteen-point agreement incorporates the gist of an agreement that a UIA delegation had worked out with Quds Force Commander Qassim Soleimani and other Iranian officials during a May 1-3 visit to Tehran. While the agreement grants Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) the ability to enter and conduct lawful arrests and seizures of heavy weapons, it does not advance Prime Minister Maliki's oft-stated call for dissolution of the Jaysh al-Mehdi (JAM) militia or impose an affirmative duty upon Sadrist to turn over medium/heavy weapons. For his part, Maliki continues to maintain maximum flexibility by standing behind his artful but disingenuous claim that the agreement is between the UIA (not the GOI) and the Sadrist, and that the GOI is monitoring implementation over the deal's four-day validity period. The May 12 agreement marked the second time in the

last seven weeks that Tehran has brokered a face-saving way for Iraq's largest competing Shia factions to disengage at least temporarily from a protracted GOI-led security operation that could have been extremely bloody for both sides. However, the agreement does not address the underlying economic and political factors that have led to intra-Shia conflict, thus ensuring future violence. When such violence recurs, the parties will likely once again trudge to Tehran and ask Qassim Soleimani to sort out the chaos that he has been instrumental in creating and perpetuating. End Summary.

----- Substance of May 12 16-Point UIA-Sadr Trend Ceasefire Agreement -----

2. (U) On May 12, representatives of the joint UIA/Sadr Trend Committee agreed upon the following sixteen points as part of a larger four-day ceasefire agreement. The verbatim points are as follows:

- A cease fire to take effect as of dawn May 11, 2008 and for the duration of four days in order to achieve the following:
  - end the illegal manifestation of arms.
  - clear all explosive charges and mines in all roads by the Iraqi government, and no one has the right to object to that.
  - Immediate opening of outlets to Sadr City, other than the outlet of Al Talbiyah. A minimum of one outlet shall be opened.
  - Immediate resumption of the activities of institutions and directorates that ceased working in Sadr City.
  - The entry of Iraqi Forces to Sadr City to practice their tasks after the end of the four days period, in order to impose State control and law and order as well as pursuing illegal manifestations. No individual or entity has the right to interfere in the government's work whether in security, services, economy or others.
  - Both parties shall continue to commit to a positive media message.
  - The government shall take legal proceedings against any Army or Police member committing violations during their service, through a committee to be formed by the Prime Minister in order to receive complaints and pursue investigations.
  - All political parties shall conduct their activities freely in accordance with the law.
  - All arrests shall be carried out based on warrants except for those who carry arms against the State and under the supervision of Prime Minister.

- Sadr Trend shall confirm that it does not possess medium or heavy weapons. The government has the right to raid and search any location suspected of having heavy or medium weapons, in accordance with applicable laws and respect of internal affairs of the Offices of the Martyr Al Sadr (OMS) during the search.
- Prohibit the targeting, from Sadr City or other locations, of civilian locations, service and government institutions and agencies, party offices including the International Zone.
- Work on increasing investigation committees to complete Sadr City detainees' cases, in order to expedite the release of the innocents and the prosecution of the perpetrators.
- GOI is responsible for determining the number of Iraqi forces needed to impose security in the city. The government shall avoid the use of foreign forces in the event of abiding by the above points.
- The parliament committee of human rights shall pursue detainees' affairs in prisons.
- A committee of the Sadr Trend and UIA shall be formed to follow up with the implementation of the above points, as a guarantor of government's commitment if the Sadr Trend is committed.
- A committee of the Sadr Trend and UIA shall work on achieving the following points:
  - Work on returning displaced Sadrist families to the provinces, which they have left due to the security events.
  - Follow up on implementing the above points in Baghdad and the other governorates.
- Work on establishing a practical mechanism to compensate those who were damaged.

----- Substance of UIA Delegation's May 1-2 Discussions in Iran -----

3. (S) The May 12 agreement encapsulates the gist of an agreement that came out of a May 1-2 UIA delegation visit to Tehran, where they met with Iranian officials led by Qassim Soleimani to express concerns about Iran's assistance to armed fighters associated with Muqtada al-Sadr (Ref A and B). Based upon readouts from delegation members Khalid al-Attiya, Ali al-Adib, and Tareq Abdullah, with additional information provided by VP Adel Abdel Mehdi and others, the discussions produced general agreement with Iranian officials on "principles" proposed by the Iraqi delegation. Adel and Adib told us they believed Tehran would "pressure" Muqtada al-Sadr into accepting and

complying with the following "principles:"

- All armed presence in Sadr City must end.
- Sadr City must be cleared of all IEDs.
- GOI checkpoints are not meant to encircle Sadr City but to provide security.
- GOI should have full control of Sadr City.
- All political parties must be allowed to operate in Sadr City.
- All people must obey the law and violators are subject to arrest.
- No one should target the International Zone with indirect fire.
- GOI has the right to search for and seize medium and heavy weapons.
- All non-GOI courts must be dissolved.
- No one should make public statements that escalate violence.
- Coalition Force operations, including air operations, in Sadr City should be kept at a minimum level.
- Committee of UIA and Sadrists Trend representatives will be formed to oversee implementation of principles and talk through problems before they get out of hand.

----- Two Agreements Mostly Similar -----

4. (C) Ahmed al-Hassani, advisor and nephew to UIA delegation member and joint UIA-Sadrists committee negotiator Ali al-Adib, told us Sadrists negotiators accepted all of the UIA's main points but argued hard to add points to increase ingress/egress to the area by Sadr City residents; to protect against repeat of alleged ISF abuses by requiring Maliki to establish a committee to look into human rights violations; and to require greater GOI focus on detainee abuse and release issues. He said the UIA relented on these issues because the overall agreement accomplished the UIA's main objective of Sadrists acknowledgment of the GOI right to enter all parts of Sadr City to impose the rule of law. VP Adel made the same point May 12 to the Ambassador (septel), noting the importance that the Sadrists are obliged to permit the Iraqi army to enter and conduct lawful operations in all parts of Sadr City. It is important to note that neither the Tehran "principles" nor the May 12 agreement call for JAM dissolution or impose an affirmative duty upon Sadrists to turn over medium/heavy weapons, both of which have been demanded by PM Maliki. For his part, Maliki continues to maintain maximum flexibility by standing behind his artful but disingenuous claim that the agreement is between the UIA (not the GOI) and the Sadrists, and that the GOI is

monitoring implementation over the pact's four-day term validity period.

----- Comment -----

5. (C) UIA negotiator Ali al-Adib and Mohsen al-Hakim, the Tehran-based ISCI representative and son to ISCI chieftain Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, were quoted in the Iranian press as being almost effusive in expression of gratitude for Tehran's efforts to mediate the ceasefire deal. Indeed, the May 12 agreement marked the second time in the last seven weeks that Tehran has brokered a face-saving way for Iraq's largest competing Shia factions -- the UIA (representing the GOI) and the Sadr Trend -- to disengage at least temporarily from a protracted GOI-led security operation that could have been extremely bloody for both sides. The late-March "Nine Point Agreement" struck between the UIA and Sadr in Tehran (Ref C) allowed Maliki to claim victory for his Basrah campaign, and permitted most of Sadr's Basrah militants to live to fight another day, with most of their heavy weaponry intact. While the May 12 agreement is off to a rocky start (continued clashes have been reported, at least one rocket was fired from Sadr City in the direction of the International Zone, and Sadrists have reportedly refused to divulge buried IED locations to the ISF), it may provide a way out of the current stalemate for the warring Shia factions, just as the Basrah agreement has done. What the agreement does not do -- or even try to do -- is address the underlying economic and political factors that have led to intra-Shia conflict: widespread unemployment and resentment among the urban Shia underclass; a perception that the ISF is a uniformed militia of the Shia establishment; an embattled government that is reluctant to grant its opponents any measure of legitimacy; and an abundance of armed groups who consistently demonstrate a casual willingness to resort to violence. The apparent unwillingness or inability of the competing groups to address those issues ensures that further internecine Shia bloodshed is all but inevitable. When such violence occurs, it seems likely that the parties will again trudge to Tehran and ask Qassim Soleimani to sort out the chaos that he has been instrumental in creating and perpetuating.

CROCKER